

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
DATED 10-15-12
RFI NO. SOL-HQ-12-00033**

1. Reference: In the BACKGROUND section on Page 1 it mentions that the locations of the deployed terminals are both CONUS and OCONUS Government sites

What are the OCONUS sites?

Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico (including all of the U.S. Virgin Islands).

2. Reference: In the BACKGROUND section on Page 1 it mentions that all PSUs and many MCPs have VoIP phone systems that provide incoming/outgoing voice connectivity via a toll-free telephone number.

Are these a toll-free “800 type” phone number or do they have a service plan that provides for unlimited CONUS calling with the monthly recurring charge per phone number?

They are unlimited CONUS and OCONUS calling plans with a monthly reoccurring charge per line.

3. Reference: In the PLACE OF PERFORMANCE section it mentions that bandwidth services shall be provided throughout the United States and its outlying areas, including Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories.

Which U.S. Territories are to be covered under this statement as there is no further mention of U.S. Territories in the RFI and no clarification on regional coverage areas in the bandwidth section?

Coverage must include all CONUS locations and all of Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

4. Reference: In the SCOPE / B. MAINTENANCE section the second and third bullets mention deployment personnel must deploy to locations for on-site servicing and include all travel, parts and labor.

By parts is this to indicate spares and are these spares GFE or are they supposed to be provided by the contractor?

“Parts” is a reference to any item that is needed to fix or make the PSU/MCP functional.

5. Reference: In the SCOPE / C. NETWORK OPERATIONS CENTER REQUIREMENTS (NOC) section it states - At a minimum, the contractor shall provide the following performance metrics to ensure proper delivery of service and includes the following bullets:

Bullet 4 - Grade of service

What is the definition of this per EPA?

This means the quality of service must be maintained and available 24 x 7, with no loss in service.

Bullet 12 - Maritime Communications

Is there a requirement for Maritime Communications? **NO**

If so, what areas are to be covered? N/A

If so, what terminals will be used for this and what are the complete terminal specifications? N/A

Will these terminals also need to have access to four separate satellites simultaneously? This could severely limit the number of potential satellites depending upon the regions needing to be covered.

No.

Bullet 14 – Earth station and teleport end-to-end network management and operations, service provisioning; and Dual redundant IP solutions.

What is meant by the Dual redundant IP solutions?

NOC has more than one high bandwidth Internet provider for redundancy.

6. Reference: In the SCOPE / E. TRANSITION PLAN section the fourth bullet states a detailed timeline “beginning” with 12:01 am on the last day of the current contract, (estimated date of March 29, 2013) indicating all milestones (each PSU coming online) and locations for work as described above. Should this be “A detailed timeline ‘ending prior to’ 12:01am on the last date of the current contract...? As the RFI mentioned in the section above this statement “It is unacceptable to have an entire blackout of service for any period of time during the transition. It is EPA’s preference to have little or no lapse in service for any PSU.” This statement would indicate a transition must be completed prior to the end of the current contract.

Note: This answer below is provided for informational purposes only. This information is not required by the RFI which is being conducted market research purposes only. A formal Request for Proposals will be forth coming for this requirement in the upcoming 2-3 months. The information below is provided, if it helps to provide a response to addressing the RFI.

EPA would prefer a seamless transition either just before the end of the current contract or immediately following, but realize that there may be a transition. The Transition Plan, which will be used to evaluate all vendors, will be used to determine what works best for the EPA. Under the RFP, most likely, each vendor’s transition plan contained in their response to the RFP will most likely be part of the evaluation process to determine which vendor provides an overall best value and solution to meeting the Government’s needs under the requirement.

7. Reference: CONTRACTOR RESPONSE TO RFI section: 1001: Dedicated Bandwidth Services, (2M x 2M)

Is the contractor to provide Dedicated Bandwidth Services of 2Mb x 2Mb as a dedicated network for EPA that is to be utilized and shared by any or all of the 56 EPA PSU’s ? Or does this mean that every PSU will have a dedicated CIR of 2Mb x 2Mb and there are to be multiple networks on each satellite totaling 112Mb x 112Mb?

It is a dedicated network for EPA that is to be utilized and shared by any or all of the 56 EPA PSUs. However, if a vendor proposes a dedicated CIR of 2 Mb x 2 Mb or splitting the EPA PSUs over multiple EOSs and each receiving 2 Mb x 2 Mb, that will be taken into account when determining which vendor is providing the best service to the EPA.

Is EPA’s intention to have a 2Mb x 2Mb network on four separate satellites simultaneously to avoid any line-of-site blockage? If so, does EPA require to have all terminals to be registered and active in each of

the four separate satellite networks at all times in order to comply with the mitigation of blockage mentioned above and also the mentioned 24/7/365 days per year without the need for the PSU end users to notify the contractor or provider for access?

No. However, each PSU has the ability to be deployed as a National Asset, which means that if there is a National Event (hurricane, earthquake, terrorist event, etc.), to any CONUS location. Therefore, it is possible that multiple PSUs will be deployed to one location to provide a communication network for field operations.

8. Reference: 1002: Dedicated Bandwidth Services, (4M x 4M)

Are we to assume that this is a secondary option that EPA would like to know what the cost would be for this to be the size of the base network as opposed to the 2Mb x 2Mb in 1001? **Yes**

If so, then all of the questions from 1001 would apply.

All responses from above apply. If vendors would like to provide costs/prices for the CLINS 1001-1013 under the RFI, it is up to their digression. Prices are not required under the RFI.

Based on the information provided regarding the terminal in the quick start guide with 3 and 4 watt BUCs on all antennas it is almost inevitable that the smaller terminals will NOT be able to close this link size on any satellite. This would open additional comparisons between contractors to be able to provide upgraded terminals to EPA in order to satisfy this request – is that EPA's intention at this point?

If a vendor is not able to continue the same or better service than we currently are experiencing, they need to include all costs associated with upgrading the terminals to achieve the required bandwidth.

9. Reference: 1003: Individual Increased Bandwidth Service. (2048k x 1024k/ unit/month)

Is it EPA's intent to increase the baseline network by 2048k x 1024k for one month and provide this increase in a CIR to the requesting terminal?

No.

Or is the intent to provide the individual terminal with 2048k x 1024k outside of the base network as an iSCPC link for example?

The individual terminal will receive increased bandwidth service of at least 2048k x 1024k during the one month period. This bandwidth is separate from the 2 Mb x 2 Mb service that is supplied to the remaining PSUs for that month.

Should this item be priced as QTY 1 that EPA could exercise this item as many times as needed?

Yes

10. Reference: 1004 thru 1008:

Are we to assume that the intent is that we should provide pricing in reference to the heading rather than the body of each of these line items, as it appears to be a cut-and-paste error in the body of each item? Questions asked for 1003 would also apply to sections 1004 thru 1008.

If vendors would like to provide costs/prices for the CLINS 1001-1013 under the RFI, it is up to their digression. Prices are not required under the RFI.

There was a previous error in the body of each item of Attachment A (2048 Kbps outbound x 1024 Kbps inbound). See revised RFI Attachment A that contains corrected information highlighted in yellow.

11. Reference: 1010: Repairs, Purchase, Replacement and Upgrades, (T&M)

Does EPA expect pricing for this item? If so what pricing is expected?

Would EPA rather have the contractor's capability to provide these items rather than to have pricing for this item?

Pricing is not required under the RFI. Vendors are to address requirements in the CLINS 1001-1013 and under the SOW in their capability statement.

12. Reference: 1013: VoIP Configuration and Service. (FFP per month)

The second line states that the contractor must maintain current numbering plan.

Should we assume that the current phone numbers provided via the current contract are portable and the existing provider will assist in porting the existing numbers to the new contractor?

Yes

How many VoIP phones are to be included in this line item?

EPA currently has 78 VoIP phone lines.

What are the restrictions or plan details expected within the firm fixed price

Note: This answer below is provided for informational purposes only. This information is not required by the RFI which is being conducted market research purposes. A formal Request for Proposals will be forth coming for this requirement in the upcoming 2-3 months. The information below is provided, if it helps to provide a response to addressing the RFI.

EPA currently has unlimited usage at a fixed price per line per month. EPA expects to be informed of the cost per month and if the service is unlimited or restricted to a set amount of minutes per month per line.

13. Reference: Terminals

The RFI mentions 56 terminals total, however the quick start guide shows 27 PSUs and the NARFCOM PSU locations map shows 31 PSUs (including trailers and MCP units)

What is the total number of terminals to be supported currently?

Are “the remaining 26 PSU’s” mentioned in the quick start guide either .96m or .98m terminals as well, meaning same configurations as noted in the first two terminal types in the quick start guide?

Yes

14. The RFI does not directly mention a modem technology, the quick start guide shows all 27 of these terminals to have iDirect 3100 satellite modems, however, in the Justification and Approval Notice mentions the following statement on Page 3 “The services provided by Miri under Contract No. EP-W-08-074 includes connecting to the IsoTropics Networks NOC and the use of Hughes Network Systems.” Are all terminals currently equipped with iDirect 3100 modem or is there a different modem technology used for the remaining terminals that a configuration is not provided? If so what is that technology platform and what are the terminal configurations?

There are several EPA Regions/Special Teams that have upgraded modems to the iDirect 5000 modems.

15. Can you please provide a technical description of the satellite equipment that comprises a PSU?

It does not exist and EPA does not wish to expend contract funds to have the contractor develop a document of this type.

The REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) No. SOL-HQ-12-00033 Attachment A document states that: “The EPA’s current Network Operations Center (NOC) is IsoTropic Networks, Inc., located in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.” It further states: “The contractor may propose to keep the current NOC or propose a new NOC”. The term NOC typically describes a facility where network monitoring and network operational functions are performed. NOCs typically are staffed with personnel.

16. If the current vendor (IsoTropic Networks, Inc.) is managing the existing network that these PSU remotes are on now, how would it be possible for a new vendor to use the same NOC facilities?

The current vendor is not IsoTropic Networks, Inc. They solely provide the bandwidth.

17. Can you please define the word “NOC” as used within this document?

Network Operations Center

18. Is there any government owned hardware currently in use at the teleport or in the NOC?

No.

The Solicitation says “Location of the deployed terminals (PSUs) is both in the continental United States (CONUS) and outside the continental United States (OCONUS) Government sites.” The actual locations of the OCONUS sites will need to be identified so that vendors can be certain that the proposed services will be available there.

19. Can you please precisely identify any US territories or other OCONUS sites where the service will need to be available?

Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In the Solicitation, Section D. NETWORK OPERATIONS CENTER REQUIREMENTS (NOC), the second bullet point is: “• Latency (maximum);” It is most likely that this is a mistake, and the correct description would be either the word “minimum” or some actual metric expressed in milliseconds.

20. Can you please clarify what is meant by this bullet point?

The amount of delay, measured in milliseconds, that occurs in a round-trip data transmission.

The Government requests that Contractors respond to the subject RFI “using the attached format entitled ‘Capability Statement’.” The Capability Statement is an Excel file with Items that limit some responses to one or two pages. Do you want Contractors to restrict responses to the Excel sheet, Column F; or will you accept responses in an MS Word file? If you require responders to use the Excel file or Word for that matter, what do you consider a page, e.g. fits on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper with 1” margins, 0.5” margins; fits on a 11 x 17 sheet of paper with 0.5” margins; fits on a single page with 8pt font or 12pt font; etc? If we are restricted to the Excel format, must we include Columns A through E on our limited page responses?

Responses to the capability statement can be in MS Excel or MS Word using 8.5 x11 sheet, no less than .5 margins and no less than 9pt font.

21. Page 4 of the RFI document reads: “CONTRACTOR MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN RESPONSE TO RFI”, and goes on to list Items 1001 through 1013. Please clarify how the Government wants Contractors to incorporate responses to the 13 Items into the provided “Capability Statement.” If Contractors are required to provide responses to the 13 items, please clarify what the Government means by “Responses”. Does the Government intend that we respond to the Items as questions about a company’s capability?

Vendors are not required to provide pricing under the RFI. Vendors should include or address the requirements under Contract Line items 1001-1013 in their capability statement. If the Government requires the services under CLINS 1001-1013 how can the vendor meet these requirements in the CLINS 1001-1013 and under the SOW in their capability statement.

22. Please clarify Item 4, Sample Submission (maximum of two pages). What type of data or information is the Government requesting in a “Sample Submission”?

The sample submission is no longer required under the RFI and has been removed under RFI capability statement updated 10-12-12.

23. Item 5 of the Capability Statement reads: “Identify if your firm has a GSA contract or if your firm has any other MAS contract then provide the contract number and effective dates.” What is the intent of the phrasing: “that provide the contract number and effective dates”?

We want to know what types of contracts are in the marketplace for this requirement. We want to know if vendors are on the GSA Schedule or hold Multiple Award Schedules with other Government Agencies. If a vendor has a contract under GSA or a MAS, please provide the contract number(s) under these schedules and what are the periods of performance of a vendor’s contracts under these schedules.

24. Regarding the PCU’s; What size dish do they currently operate with? What modem is used? Solely Ku band?

This is answered in the Quick Start Guide, which was provided.

25. What infrastructure do the PCU's have – detailed layout if possible?

Not available. See response to Question # 16.

26. Are all PCU's set up in similar layout / design?

Yes, all PSUs are set up in a similar layout/design.

27. Is there any difference in the setup – with regard to satellite – on the MCP's?

The MCPs are either bus, motor home or trailer mounted dishes.

28. What are the current satellites used for the operation?

See the Quick Start Guide.

29. Can you provide information about the manufacturer of the PSUs, the model name and model #, and size of each unit?

See the Quick Start Guide and the Answer to Question # 16.

30. Is the intent initially to maintain the existing, previously purchased PSU equipment?

Yes. Also, EPA will be continually purchasing new equipment or upgrading (as allowed by the budget situation of each Region).

31. Are the PSU's deployed by EPA personnel or is awardee expected to support deployment?

PSUs are deployed by EPA On-Scene Coordinators, START Contractors, and EPA Response Support Corp staff (usually Logistics Section or Communications Unit Leaders).

32. Are all bandwidth requirements (RFI 1001-1008) expected to be provisioned on all four satellites? Can the required bandwidth be shared among four birds?

Yes, the bandwidth can be shared among four birds. The only requirement is that all PSUs can receive adequate bandwidth in all CONUS areas, plus Alaska, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, and Hawaii.

33.. Are there specific teleports the EPA expects to land at or is that determined by the awardee?

Note: This answer below is provided for informational purposes only. This information is not

required by the RFI which is being conducted for market research purposes only. A formal Request for Proposals will be forth coming for this requirement in the upcoming 2-3 months. The information below is provided, if it helps to provide a response to addressing the RFI.

Information purposes only: Under the upcoming RFP, it is anticipated that vendors will provide all costs associated with switching teleports and must be included in the cost specifics in response to the upcoming RFP. In addition, there will be specific requirement of the teleport (or NOC) that are mandatory. Lastly, there are specific service requirements, especially during a move to a new teleport, that will be specified in the RFP.